

Subject: Wine at Orangewood Consulting 9, December 2nd, 2001

Sent: Sunday, December 2, 2001 8:04 PM

To our Wine Aficionados,

November has come and gone and what has happened at Orangewood Consulting, I ask myself. And myself answers "Quite a lot!" However, you'll have to enjoy these achievements vicariously.

The major events were on the supply side of the business - this is where we identify and buy wine, always remembering to keep quantities within our ability to execute Plan B (drinking the wine ourselves if we can't sell it).

I did visit both Noceto (1 hour east of Sacramento) and RustRidge (1 hour west of Sacramento).

At Villa Noceto I got to meet their sheep dog, who thought I was an errant sheep upon arrival. I survived with my khakis intact, which is better than other visitors have done. Apparently the protocol is to stay in the car and honk the horn. This protocol does not apply to the tasting room. I learned that Noceto is working on another couple of Sangiovese variants. One blends the Sangiovese that did not meet their Normale quality requirements and was not worth much on the bulk market with a little Zinfandel. They were considering calling the result "Nuts" but their friends told them to stay with the cachet of Noceto so they are calling it "Tutti i Giorni" (every day). The label describes the wine as "quaffable", so we took three bottles along to my thirsty daughter and son-in-law in Napa and declared it definitely quaffable. This wine may be available soon. They are also working on a Chianti style wine to be called Misti di Sangiovese. This wine blends in Malvasia and Trebbiano wines in a similar way to the wines of the Chianti Classico region. I'll get some samples of both wines and try to arrange a tasting in the spring for you all. In the meantime they told me that they are in the San Francisco Chronicle's Top 100 California wines. It's on the web and is also the only Sangiovese there. The article is at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2001/11/04/CM186970.DTL>

After a two hour drive (through Sacramento) my next stop was at the RustRidge winery. I told them about the results of the wine tasting and then I had lots of tough questions for them like "What are the distributor prices?" (They are OK.) And "How many cases of these wines do you have?" (They have enough.) And "Why do you use a composite cork" (Because it gives a better seal.) And do you really have no space between Rust and Ridge? (Yes.) And how on earth do you get the Maytag and cream cheeses to blend with the toasted pine nuts and black pepper? (30 seconds in the microwave softens everything up perfectly - I tried it works.) And so forth. They are applying to AZ for their out of state producer license. I am going along to a couple of restaurants to see what people think. I hope to have the wines in Arizona in the next couple of weeks.

Another winery (yes, another one) called Miranda Park is in Australia. The wine is made by an ex-Measurex guy. His partner and international salesman is located in Kaua'i (Hawaii). I visited him there last week. (I warned you that this would be only vicarious excitement.) I won't bore you with the details except to say that we did drink some wine (actually quite a lot) and we are trying to get a container of wine (1240 cases - which is also quite a lot) shipped to our warehouse in Arizona in 2002. How many of you think that a trip to Australia is appropriate? Geographic note: There is a place in Kaua'i that has the most rainfall in the world - 400 inches. I think I was close to that place.

So much for supply side. How is the sales side?

Retail outlets:

AJ's at Central: The 1999 Noceto Sangiovese is starting to move more - I took some more down without dropping it.

Moon Valley AJ's: Archie, the Cellar Master, tried the wine himself and declared it good...but he is short on shelf space at the moment. I will call him every week or so until he tells me to go away or starts to stock it.

Wine Supply: Tom Hamilton at www.winesupply.net will supply cases of wine at a small markup and deliver it.

Restaurants:

Rosti is at 1044 East Camelback and is now carrying the 1999 Noceto Sangiovese, available by the glass. Territorial Bar and Grill continues to carry the 1998 Noceto Riserva - but their focus has not yet come to the wine list. There are 15 other restaurants that I am talking to. I spoke to 10 of them during November. I am hoping that once I have a "stable" of restaurants this gets easier, so far it's all up hill. On the other hand, I was in one restaurant waiting for the American Express Salesman to finish his spiel. He looked at my bottles of wine and said he wished he had my job.. the wine is always redder on the other side of the fence!

Wine Bars:

Epicurean Wines on Thunderbird at Scottsdale Road did have the wine tasting on Friday 23rd, as advertised in WOC-8 and the AZ Repulsive. Apparently it is a big happening thing on every Friday other than the one after Thanksgiving. Still I got to try my spiel on a dozen people, saw several bottles sold (and not just to the WOC reader who attended - thanks Mark!). The net result is that both of the Noceto wines are now available at this store at reasonable prices. Duck and Decanter continues to stock the Il Poggiolino and 1/2 bottles of Noceto normale. Neither of the other 2 wine bars mentioned last month has signed up.

New territories:

No further activity there - I'm thinking the spring will be the time to hit Flagstaff again - ready for their busy summer.

Portfolio:

RustRidge is on board. Marinda Park is a maybe, as described above.

Other:

In support of the notion of getting key people familiar with the Orangewood Consulting wines, Laurie and I are drinking a bottle of Noceto wine tonight - it's pretty damn good.

In the meantime, enjoy your wine drinking - you may need it to survive the Christmas Season. On that note, remember that the Noceto label has some pretty Christmassy looking green leaves on it. A red felt tip pen could be all you need to turn a bottle into a perfect Christmas gift!

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